Handilift Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes September 19, 2012

The meeting was held in the first floor conference room of the Hood Building, 200 South President Street. Attending today's meeting were: Ms. Lee Cole (ADA Council Chairperson); Dr. Scott Crawford (Handilift Committee Chairperson); Ms. Traci Brent (City of Jackson/ADA Transportation Accessibility Coordinator; Mr. Dewayne Cheatham (JATRAN's Head of Operations); Ms. Karen Robinson (JATRAN Handilift Dispatcher; Ms. Ollie Lester (Addie McBryde Rehab Center for the Blind); Mr. Jason Bunch; Mr. Fred Myers; Mr. Willie Cook; Attorney Kay Hardage (DRMS); Ms. Jerri Walton; and Ms. Jean McKinney.

The meeting convened at 1:03 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

After introductions, Ms. Lester read the minutes for the July 18th Handilift meeting. After several minor corrections proposed by Ms. Brent, the revised minutes were approved unanimously.

Old Business:

- I. New Handilift Buses Ms. Brent said that two paratransit buses arrived the last week of August and were undergoing testing. She is expecting two more with the additional wheelchair securements (4 per vehicle) in November. Ms. Cole asked if there would be sufficient bus operators to drive the vehicles. Mr. Cheatham reported that they have several operators back from long term leave, and that this will not be an obstacle. There will be plenty of operators to run the vehicles.
- II. Public Outreach Ms. Cole commented that there are many people with disabilities in the Jackson area who might benefit from paratransit service, but simply do not know of the recent improvements to service. She asked what is being done to inform the public about JATRAN's Handilift service. Mr. Cheatham said that a formal publicity campaign was financially infeasible. Cole agreed, saying that people often ignore formal advertisements. However, Attorney Hardage suggested public service announcements on the local television stations. Ms. Cole suggested getting JATRAN's advertising coordinator Melissa Dean on local mid-day television news shows (e.g., "Midday Mississippi"). Ms. Lester advised personal contacts with various disability organizations. Mr. Bunch recommended a public service announcement or interview on "Supertalk MS, 97.3 FM" radio. Finally, Mr. Myers advised reaching out to various church organizations so they can get the word out to their congregations.
- III. The chairperson asked about the newly approved FY 2013 JATRAN budget, adding that there is a \$730,990 cut to the City's overall transportation line item. Crawford asked if this meant any cuts to JATRAN or their services. Mr. Cheatham said that there were no cuts to JATRAN per se; stating that JATRAN's

funding for FY 2013 is largely unchanged. Ms. Brent said the cuts were mostly made in the City's Transit Services Division budget.

New Business:

- I. Use of Global Positioning System/Software Crawford related an instance in which a bus operator had difficulty finding her way to the destination. She wanted him to help provide directions, but given that his voice is too weak to be heard, he was unable to assist. Later, a different operator came to pick him up, but almost left him, because she was at the wrong location. Crawford asked why those bus operators weren't using the on-board GPS system to provide directions and confirm the correct location. Mr. Cheatham said that the RouteMatch GPS system and software does not work as reliably as JATRAN had hoped. For instance, sometimes the software gets hung up because a street name has changed. Other times, the radio communications are down because of weather, or poor coverage (especially in North Jackson). Mr. Cheatham said that RouteMatch technicians were working with them more closely to update the software and prevent future problems such as these.
- II. Training/Safety Review after Incidents The chair asked if there was any systematic way that accidents or safety problems were shared with all bus operators so as to prevent future incidents. Mr. Cheatham said that all incidents or accidents were reviewed by himself and their risk manager, Leesha Heard, and were discussed with the operator in question. Crawford reiterated that it might be a good idea to use incidents as training vignettes so that all the operators might learn to avoid similar events. Ms. McKinney asked about sensitivity training of staff, specifically, about how to avoid stereotyping or stigmatizing people with disabilities. Cheatham said that this is a regular part of their training, but added he is working to improve the sensitivity of some of the newer staff.
- III. Ms. Cole commented that she wished dispatchers and customer service personnel would be more realistic in their estimating time-of-arrival for late vehicles. Ms. Cole indicated that on more than one occasion she was told that a bus would arrive in "just a few minutes" when really, it took much longer. Mr. Cheatham said he would work for improvement in this area.
- IV. Finally, Mr. Cheatham discussed a recent failure to get Mr. Bunch home from work. Apparently, Mr. Bunch requested a return trip home for 2:30pm, but he wasn't actually picked up until 5pm. Somehow, Mr. Bunch was left off the afternoon schedule and there was a failure to follow through when Bunch called and asked to be picked up. Cheatham apologized, said that this was unacceptable, and that it would not happen again.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:30pm.

These Minutes were written by committee Chairperson, Scott M. Crawford, Ph.D. and approved at the November 14, 2012 meeting of the Committee.